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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 8783-82
29 October 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Stanley M. Moskowitz
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT : Brezhnev's 27 October Military Speech

1. The press, not without reason, has given a lot of play to Brezhnev's 27 October speech before a high-level military meeting in Moscow. Contrary to some accounts, the gathering itself is not unusual. It happens every year. What is unusual is Brezhnev's appearance. Over the last twenty years he's made an appearance only twice before, both times of uncertainty for the Soviet military establishment.

- In 1967 when the uniformed military evidently feared the appointment of a civilian successor to the deceased Minister of Defense, Marshal Malinovski; and
- In 1972 when the US mining of Haiphong Harbor raised questions about President Nixon's impending visit to Moscow.

On both occasions, the top party leadership sought to allay military anxieties over the direction of Soviet defense policies.

2. I believe that Brezhnev's principal, but not only, audience was the military itself. The PDB and some press reporting have portrayed Brezhnev's speech as reassuring to the military. By that it is evidently meant that the military will continue to get substantial growth (it's been running \pm 4% per year) despite economic problems and other priorities. Three interpretations of the text are possible. Brezhnev has told the military:

- That they will get more (i.e., greater growth than the \pm 4% they're getting now) to keep up with US.

-- They can count on the same level of growth.

-- They may have to do with less growth.

I don't think the language supports the view that Brezhnev has reassured the military by agreeing to provide more real growth. Note that Brezhnev makes no reference to "strengthening" the armed forces, but rather to "consolidating its material base." He goes on to say that a "lag" in military technology is inadmissible, but he puts the onus on the USSR's scientists and engineers--not on the Central Committee to provide the necessary resources--to see that the lag doesn't develop. Indeed, he seems to imply that the Central Committee already provides for "all" the military's needs. His call for greater combat readiness, and improvements in troop morale, training, and command all fits more neatly with more austere military solutions.

3. I admit that the foregoing interpretation is influenced by a [] report that the head of civil defense in the Moscow area was told that his budget was being adversely affected (we do not know whether it was being cut or he just wasn't getting the growth he asked for) by Brezhnev's food program. The report suggested that other defense activities were also being so affected.

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4. Other aspects of his speech support this interpretation:

-- He reminded his high-level military audience of the domestic "shortcomings"--economic bottlenecks (in metals, fuel, transport, essential to both economic sectors), agricultural problems, and the population's "growing demands" for grain.


-- He emphasized the "exceptional importance" of the Food Program. We think this has been controversial, and [] the dismay of a Civil Defense general whose budget had been cut to finance this apparently costly effort.

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5. I don't think the text really enables us to differentiate between level growth and reduced growth.

6. The reference to China is interesting. In the context of the statement, Brezhnev is suggesting that a China connection can be helpful in countering the US. This is consistent with keeping military growth even or reduced. It is also consistent with the idea that Brezhnev wants to put the military on notice that concessions to the Chinese might be necessary to help thwart the US. If this interpretation is correct, Brezhnev's references to China serves the purpose--in addition, of course to sending us and the Chinese a message.

7. Another domestic message is clear: I am very much in charge here and Ustinov is with me; and so too are the Politburo members whom you see behind the lecturn.



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